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"I am the vine,... ...ye are the branches"

The Grapevine

Vignettes of Seminary Life

A Japanese maple at the Saint Gregory Palamas Monastery

Aristotle and Confucius, Part 1. *The following is the introduction to a serialization of an independent study I did for the B.Th. program.*

When one considers the history of philosophy, two of the most prominent figures that immediately come to mind are Aristotle (384 B.C.–322 B.C.) and Confucius (551 B.C.–479 B.C.), representing the Western and Eastern traditions, respectively. Aristotle was born into a world where philosophy had gained a significant foothold as a professional pursuit. He was preceded, most notably, by Socrates (*ca.* 470 B.C.–399 B.C.) and Plato (*ca.* 424 B.C.–348 B.C.), the latter being his teacher. Aristotle represents the highest development of ancient Greek philosophy. He sought to define things in the clearest terms and to advance intellectually through analogy to the ultimate meaning of all things. Socrates represents a turning point in Greek philosophy, in that he pursued ethical issues as being the most important. Knowledge of nature is interesting, he averred, but it does not make people better human beings. The pre-Socratics largely focused on natural philosophy. In Aristotle we see a holistic combination of philosophies both natural and ethical.

A statue of Aristotle in Aristotle's Park, Stagira, Greece

Confucius—a Latinized form of the Mandarin Chinese "孔夫子" ("*Kǒng Fūzi*"), meaning "Great Master Kong"—flourished in a time of turmoil, when the large Kingdom of Zhou was breaking into separate, smaller states. It was the dawn of what is known as the Warring States Period (475 B.C.–221 B.C.). Confucius is widely considered to be the first professional teacher in Chinese history, although he is by no means the first sage to appear in the East. His principal concern was the establishment of peace and prosperity, and he saw that the way to achieve this was through the promotion of morality for the individual and, through him, for society as a whole. His goal was practical rather than theoretical, and this is reflected in his teachings. Although Confucius is most often compared to Aristotle, I think he is a bit closer to Socrates in character, inasmuch as for Confucius, as Jorn K. Bramann notes, "the questioning was always more important than the answers. His primary task was not to teach any specific doctrines, but to make people think."

Furthermore, as May Sim observes, "Moral mastery is what both these estimable masters [*sc.*, Aristotle and Confucius] exact. Without it, we wander in the childhood of morality despite all our clever theories." Consonant with other ancient thought systems, both the Greek and the Chinese traditions held that man's purpose is to move from chaos to harmony. Almost to a number, creation myths describe a movement from disorder to order. For example, the Babylonian world began in a watery chaos that developed into a world of warring gods, which was then resolved by the rise of a supreme god who subdued all the others and split the previously dominant goddess in two, thereby creating the earth and sky. In the ancient Chinese creation myth, the first sentient being, 盤古 (*Pángǔ*), who was human-like, awoke

from the indeterminate state of the cosmic egg and over the course of eighteen thousand years separated the visible world into earth and sky by pushing up the sky like a pillar. In the Confucian tradition, man is seen as the link between heaven (天 [*tiān*]) and earth (地 [*dì*]). The ancient Greek idea of the ἄπειρον (*apeiron*) as an indeterminate state of chaos follows a similar pattern. Creation myths are usually highly symbolic and vary according to the cultures from which they spring. Deities and religion reflect the deepest psychological values of a society. There is a remarkable consistency to these accounts, a beginning in chaos and then a movement towards harmony through the agency of being. This theme persists in moral philosophies of all cultures, that is, the movement from the chaotic state of vice to the harmonious state of virtue.

For the ancients, philosophy was concerned with all areas of human knowledge—there was no separation of subjects into secular or religious, practical or transcendent. As Sim states, "It is the modern commentator who feels it necessary to champion one side or the other and to argue practice at the expense of truth or science at the expense of ritual."

Father Vlasie, B.Th. Student

"Let Your Light So Shine." My first year at the Saint Photios Orthodox Theological Seminary affected me in many ways, first and foremost by enhancing my spiritual and intellectual formation. In addition, my understanding of the value of my time here broadened to include the benefit not only to me but also to those around me. This was made obvious to me by a brief conversation I had in an airport this past summer.

I spent the last two weeks of August 2019 in the Saints Cyprian and Justina Monastery in Phyle, Greece. During

A statue of Confucius in Gwollisa Temple, Nonsan, South Korea

my return journey to the United States, a memorable event occurred in the Paris airport. Waiting for a delayed flight, I fell into conversation with a man, close to my own age, next to me in line. Before long, I learned this man was a Catholic; he, in turn, discovered that I was Orthodox. Almost inevitably, we began to discuss the relations between the Eastern and Western churches—specifically, the Roman claim to universal authority in the Church.

This was not the first time I had spoken to someone about the legitimacy of the Papacy, and, indeed, this person used the same rhetoric and arguments that I had heard before in this context. However, where I had once been obliged to "agree to disagree" due to my lack of education on the subject, I now found myself able to compose detailed answers to the various claims I heard. The result was a perfectly friendly but short conversation (the line only allowed us so much time to speak with each other) about the Church that left me with much to think about.

Long after the conversation had ended, a related verse from the Gospel of Saint Matthew came to my mind: "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in Heaven" (St. Matthew 5:16).

I did not think of this because I was convinced that I had exemplified the command of this verse. In fact, though the conversation ended well, I spent much of my time afterwards mentally castigating myself for things I had said which had undermined the Orthodox message. The verse from Saint Matthew was, to me, a reprimand and a direction for such encounters in the future. I realized that these conversations—with those outside the Church—are opportunities to increase our own understanding while providing a witness to the Truth. This understanding immediately forged a connection between this encounter and my time at the seminary.

My thoughts this past summer were rarely far from my studies at the seminary, so it was natural for me to connect this episode to the coming year. It struck me that these words of Saint Matthew could serve as a direction for me: I may not be called to proselytize, but I should, at least, not hide my lessons from sight, thus preventing them from giving light at all (*cf.* St. Matthew 5:15). This conversation was like a warning not to depreciate the importance of my studies, not only for the good they do me, but for the good they might do others around me. This brief conversation between flights was the perfect segue back into my studies, highlighting as it did the importance of these studies and inspiring me to pursue them with greater dedication and to appreciate the possibility of their impact beyond a personal level.

Timothy Granger, B.Th. Student

Library Improvements. The staff members at the Metropolitan Chrysostomos Theological Library have been diligently working on continuing to catalogue the Seminary's collection. Throughout the summer, we received a number of generous donations that have allowed us to increase our holdings and to facilitate the use of the same.

The donations included an entire parochial lending library maintained for decades by a pious Orthodox family, the Bushunows, the members of which have been tremendously supportive of the Seminary on numerous fronts. The materials in this collection included a large number of items in Church Slavonic and Russian, many of which are no longer in print and are therefore difficult, if not impossible, to find elsewhere. We wish to express publicly our deepest thanks to the Bushunow family, and in

particular, its matriarch, Larissa Sergeevna Dmohowski, for their munificence.

In addition, the library had the good fortune of being able to purchase a radio-frequency identification (RFID) system this summer, thanks to the extreme generosity of a benefactor who has been instrumental in the formation and success of the Metropolitan Chrysostomos Theological Library. This new equipment will greatly improve the ease of processing, accessing, and tracking materials. Our deepest thanks go likewise to this individual, who has asked to remain anonymous.

As we, the library staff, continue organizing and expanding the Seminary's collection, we have taken as our working motto an insightful remark by writer and historian Abby Smith Rumsey: "It does not matter how comprehensive and well tended a collection may be. If an item cannot be located on demand because it is out of order, misplaced, or incorrectly cataloged, it effectively does not exist."

Father Gregory, Librarian

An Answer to Prayer. Around this time last year, in November of 2018, I was in the Holy Land on a pilgrimage. It was a year ago that I was praying for a change in my life, praying for God's will to be done. As I was praying, I was not sure for what I was praying, but I trusted that God would enlighten me. Prior to this trip, I had been working towards an associate degree with no declared area of study. After returning from the Holy Land, many signs seemed to point towards Saint Photios Orthodox Theological Seminary. I knew about the seminary and had been greatly

interested in enrolling. For any young adult, going away to college can be overwhelming, especially when it is on the other side of the country.

In my heart I knew that this was the answer to my prayers, and that I was ready for this, both physically and mentally. I applied, not thinking about how I might pay for it or make my way out there. I trusted that, God willing, I would be accepted and that somehow God would provide. That is exactly what happened.

I have now been here at the seminary for a little over seven weeks. This short time has been the most eye-opening period of my life. I love all of my classes, but if I had to pick three I especially enjoy, this list would include Old Testament, Church History, and Ancient Greek. The first-year classes of the bachelor's program are taught from the perspective of Traditional Orthodox scholarship and the Patristic and New Testament witness, and this has helped strengthen my spirituality as I gain a professional foundation for service in the Orthodox community.

Although I grew up an Orthodox Christian, I realize now that learning about our Faith is never-ending. This realization motivates me to continue studying towards my degree, which will facilitate my eventual teaching role and will allow me a greater involvement within the Church. I am eager to learn more about my Faith and about how to define ways of contributing to Church life activities and services. It is crucial that Orthodox Christians should strive to grow in our knowledge about our ancient Faith and preserve it for future generations, as we do not live in a country where practicing Traditional Orthodoxy is understood or encouraged.

Teodora Munteanu, B.Th. Student

Looking Deeper. Many people read the Old Testament as simple stories about people who lived righteous lives. Clearly, the account of Saint Jacob and his wives, Leah and Rachel, tells the story of their love and marriage. But like other Old Testament accounts, it is more than this. By understanding the

Dr. John Petropoulos teaching ancient Greek philosophy

deeper layers of Scripture, we can learn more about our Faith. The Church Fathers reveal to Orthodox Christians these hidden layers, explaining, for example, how the story of Saint Jacob and his wives prefigures the coming of Christ and the Church.

With the guidance of the Fathers, we can learn, through Jacob's story, that Christ was part of the Old Testament even before He walked on this earth. We may also come to see an image of Christ's love for us and a lesson about what we should strive for in this life. When we start to think with the mind of the Fathers and to look critically and humbly at the Scriptures, we begin to see Scripture through a new lens and come to understand it in a less superficial way. We begin to realize the significance of seemingly simple actions, such as stopping at a well. Opening our eyes to the meaning behind even simple actions can, perhaps, bring us a deeper awareness of the significance of our own actions. Some might say that nothing is accidental; this is certainly true about the words recorded in Holy Scripture.

Aliya Molinari, B.Th. Student

Greek Letters. Many early Church Fathers were highly educated in the Greek language, philosophy, rhetoric, and poetry—subjects we might be more likely to associate with their pagan contemporaries. Greek literature, philosophy, and culture served as one context and medium through which the Fathers first expressed God's new revelation to the world. Not only did they write in the Greek language, but, by appropriating the terminology of Greek philosophy, they defined and explained their terms clearly, and by using the logical structures and methods of argumentation developed by the ancient Greeks, they shed light on this new revelation.

This close relationship between Greek letters and Orthodoxy greatly benefitted Orthodox Christians: the original meanings of texts could be more easily grasped and Christian teachings could be correctly applied to their lives if they knew the Greek language. While Scripture is sometimes difficult to understand, the Fathers elucidated these texts using logic, dialectics, comparative analyses, and elegant rhetoric. Unlike secular thinkers, the Church Fathers—guided by humility, discernment, and purified intentions—raised intellectual discourse, awakening others spiritually and defending the purity of Orthodox truth. They saw Greek letters as an indispensable means of educational and moral upbringing, but they urged Christians to study them with discernment, for to do otherwise could harm the soul and give way to theological distortion.

Knowledge of Greek letters can continue to enhance our understanding of Orthodoxy today, extending even to our appreciation of the beautiful harmony

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Under the sacred patronage of its namesake, please help us impart light, for "without schools, we walk in darkness."
(Saint Kosmas of Aetolia)

between the words and music of traditional Orthodox chant. Though we may not be aware of it, Greek philosophy, rhetoric, and allegory remain an important basis of modern philosophy: the matrix in which people think, communicate, and act—Orthodox and non-Orthodox alike. Orthodoxy is not completely foreign to our modern context. While true knowledge in its purest form comes from revelation, the study of Greek philosophical language and methodology—which underlie both our modern mindset and the formulation of Orthodox Christian doctrine—can help us to preserve, defend, and cultivate the Orthodox Faith at both an individual and a communal level.

Julie Ling, B.Th. Student

The Fourth Cappadocian, Part 5. *This is the conclusion of a series on St. Cæsarius of Nazianzos, a serialization of a presentation that I made during the Patristics course of the M.T.S. program.*

In the previous installment, I discussed a work attributed to St. Cæsarius known as the "Four Dialogues" (Διάλογοι Τέσσαρες) or "Questions and Answers" (Ἐρωταποκρίσεις), found in *Patrologia Græca* (Vol. xxxviii, cols. 851–1189). In this final installment, I will discuss the issue of authorship.

The traditional view, that St. Cæsarius wrote the work, is upheld by St. Photios the Great, the *Souda* (a tenth-century Byzantine lexicon), and St. Nikolai of Ohrid, among others. According to most contemporary scholars, it is not an authentic work of his—part of an unfortunate trend among modern scholars. I find that the arguments given are on shaky grounds, so I will examine them here.

According to some, St. Cæsarius could not have been a theologian, because St. Gregory the Theologian, who composed a funeral oration and several funerary poems in his honor, mentioned various fields that he studied, but these did not include theology. This argument ignores the fact that theology was a very popular topic in the fourth century and that anyone trained in oratory would have been trained in theology as well. Moreover, St. Gregory speaks of St. Cæsarius engaging in theological debate with Emperor Julian the Apostate.

According to others, it was most likely written by a Monophysite (the Monophysites believed that Christ had only one nature, which was Divine), but the following passage from the work would suggest otherwise:

> [T]he Word has been united with both elements of which the nature of mortals consists, that is, soul and body, imparting vigor to each part. For if either one were absent, our salvation would be incomplete, either the body remaining in corruption, or the soul being held fast in Hades [col. 885].

A further argument is that the work contains anachronisms—engagements in theological debates that occurred shortly after St. Cæsarius' time. This argument fails to consider that the theological debates may have begun orally at an earlier time than the written record. Moreover, St. Cæsarius' own work can be used as evidence of the earlier date of such debates.

One can see that much of the scholarship denying the authenticity of the work is problematic; the authenticity has yet to be proven or disproven. But this leads us to the next question. Does it matter who wrote it? What ultimately matters is that the work is edifying and contains Orthodox teachings.

Father Chrysostomos, Lecturer